

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : DCM : Mr. Richard N. Vior

FROM : CONS: J.E. Kerr

SUBJECT: Review of Embassy contacts with Black Hebrews, 1977-78

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY: JL

DATE 8/18/81

P800154-0638

RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE

TS AUTH. REASON(S)

ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐

DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☒

RELEASE DENIED ☐ DATE: January 5, 1979

PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

1. At your request, we have reviewed our Black Hebrews files for the years 1977-78 with a view to documenting all contacts with the Black Hebrews during these years.

2. An excellent short historical summary of the arrival and experiences of the Black Hebrew Community in Israel was prepared by John Adams at the end of 1975 and is attached as Annex I for your information. A classified cable (Tel Aviv 3441) on the relation between the Black Hebrews and the SOI, prepared in September 1977, is also available.

3. VISITS

- November 1978. First visit by an Embassy officer to the Black Hebrew Community was made by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss. The purpose was to establish a direct personal contact with the leader of the community (Ben Ami Carter) through whom requests for assistance in locating whereabouts cases could subsequently be directed.

- February 1979. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.

- June 1979. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.

- November 1979. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.

- March 1980. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.

- April 1980. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.

- May 1980. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.

- June 1980. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.

- July 1980. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.

- August 1980. Visit by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss.



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Our records indicate there were three criminal arrest cases registered during 1977-78; all were for minor infractions, i.e. shop-lifting a bag of dates, shoplifting vegetables and the theft by two minors of a goat. Most arrests reported to the Embassy by the INP have involved immigration violation, i.e. illegal overstay. With very few exceptions, those arrested for an immigration charge have been released the same day.

Our records indicate 12 U.S. citizens were individually denied entry into Israel and reported as suspected members destined to join the Black Hebrew Community.

Records indicate 11 w/w cases were processed during the 1977-78 period. A brief summary of each case will be presented as far as possible.

[illegible]

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Racism, New Council of Churches, visited Israel as guests of the GOI in order to compile a first hand report on the situation of the Black Hebrews' commitment. We are not aware that a final report has ever been prepared.

8. From early 1969 when the first Black Hebrew families led by Charles Blackwell arrived in the country until 1978, there was in effect no coordinated Ministry of Interior policy toward coping with what was generally recognized as an increasingly serious problem. As the Black Hebrew Community increased in members to its present estimated 1400 persons, the MOI periodically engaged in half-hearted deportation campaigns. During the past two years, however, the MOI has shifted its efforts from deportation to a tightening of the screening at ports of entry to prevent any new members joining the Community.

By refusing at the same time to move in any manner to regularize the status of the Black Hebrews in Israel, the MOI may have hoped to so discourage the membership or to force many to voluntarily return to the U.S.

Increased vigilance at ports of entry has been particularly effective in preventing members of the Community in Israel from traveling to the U.S. to recruit new members as return to Israel has become increasingly difficult. It has at the same time created a series of problems with the U.S. in differentiating legitimate Black U.S. tourists from prospective new members of the Black Hebrew sect. Recent events in Havana may have belatedly jolted the GOI into seeking an accommodation with the Black Hebrew Community which would regularize their status in Israel for operation in carrying additional recruits from abroad.

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